Growing figs in Michigan

Dan Foster

4-8-17

Growing Figs in Michigan

- Why bother growing your own figs?
- Propagation Methods
- Favorite Varieties
- A year in the life of a northern grown fig
  - Fig Shuffle
  - Growing
  - Winter Storage
- What to do with all those figs?
- Notable people from around the world recognized for their work on Figs.

Growing Figs in Michigan

- Why bother growing your own figs?
  - Its fun. Duh!
  - It brings people together.
  - Many people enjoy knowing where their food comes from and take great pleasure in growing their own food.
  - They taste better!!!!! These are not Fig Newtons and they don't taste like "sweet dirt"

The best tasting fig you will ever taste will be one that is eaten right off the plant at its peak ripeness. "Fresh" figs sold in supermarkets don't typically ship well and they don't ripen any further once removed from the tree. They are often either bland or spoiled.

Propagation Methods

- Cutting
- Air Layers
- Seed
- Tissue Culture

Propagation Methods

- Cutting
  - The way most figs are produced and traded between fig collectors.

Removing and labelling branches from figs that are given away

Cuttings

- Taken off the stock plants when leaves have dropped in the fall.
- Cuttings are labelled and stored in Long fiber Sphagnum moss to be held for later planting
- Cuttings can be stored in a refrigerator for 6-9 months.
- This is the main way figs are traded and shared between individuals

Stored in plastic bins or Zip-lock

I like to use the highest grade moss for storage

Rooting in Moss

Rooted cutting leafing out.

Cutting rooting station

Propagation Methods

- Air Layers
  - Another great way to produce a new tree from an existing tree in the middle of the growing season.
  - I've also air layered whole tree trunks to improve the shape of the plant

Air Layering

f set in May/June can be removed in
July/August

Nero 600 Air Layer using a soda bottle

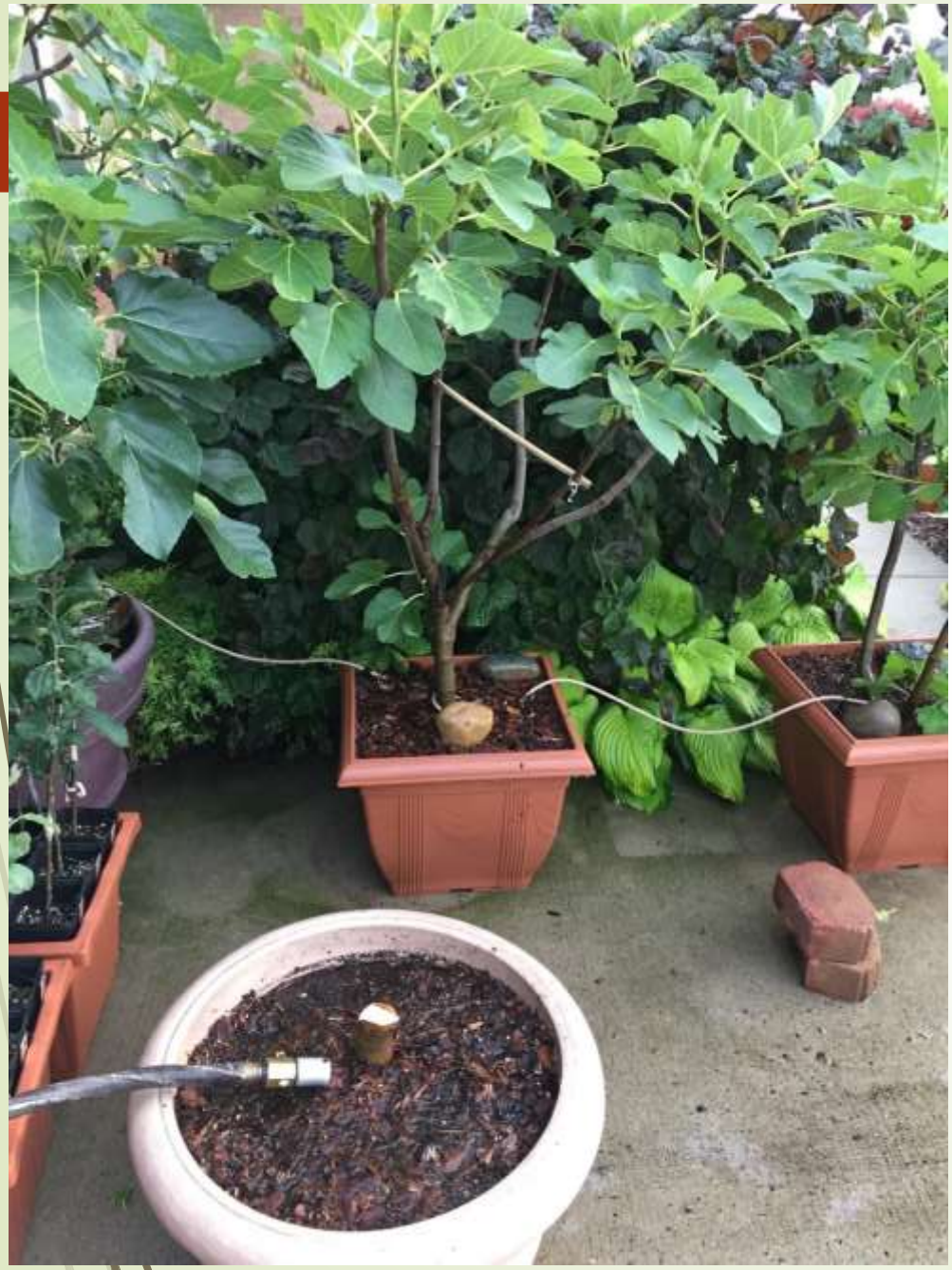
Main Trunk Air Layer – July 2016

Set in August of 2015

Air Layer removed by using a saw just below the pot.

Air Layer ready to be planted into a 20" pot

Italian 258



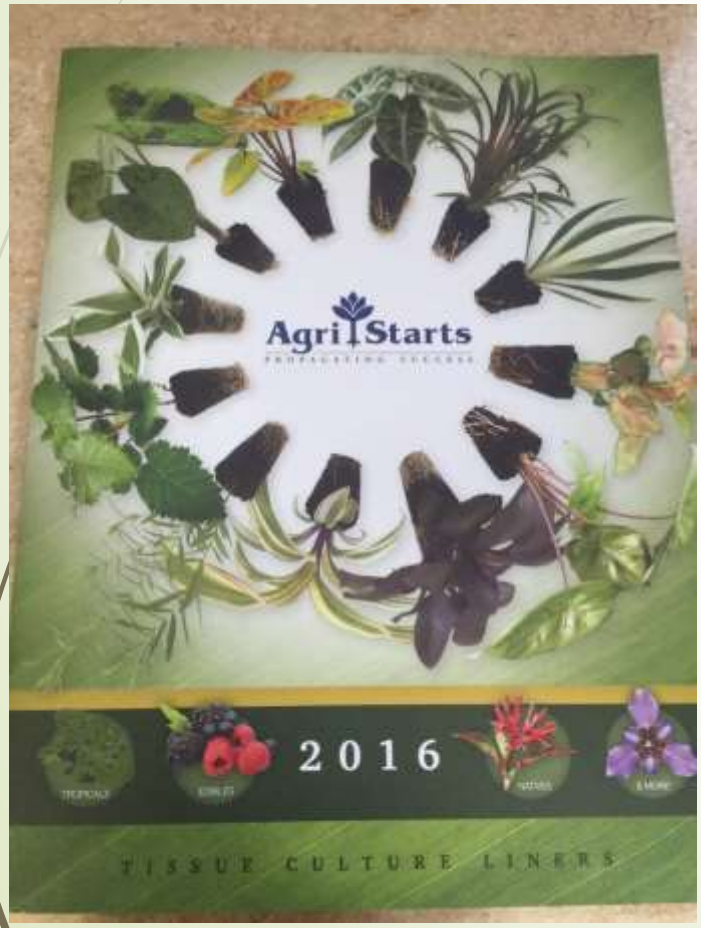
Propagation Methods

- Seed
  - Not recommended.
  - https://crfg.org/wiki/fruit/fig/

- The tiny flowers of the fig are out of sight, clustered inside the green "fruits", technically a synconium. Pollinating insects gain access to the flowers through an opening at the apex of the synconium. In the case of the common fig the flowers are all female and need no pollination. There are 3 other types, the caprifig which has male and female flowers requiring visits by a tiny wasp, Blastophaga grossorum; the Smyrna fig, needing cross-pollination by caprifigs in order to develop normally; and the San Pedro fig which is intermediate, its first crop independent like the common fig, its second crop dependent on pollination.

Propagation Methods

- Tissue Culture



- Many online nurseries offer more common varieties.
- Some are Wholesale such as Agristarts.
- Some sell individual plants via Ebay. An example of this is Wellspring gardens or Baker Creek. Many of the smaller operations just buy and resell Agristarts plugs.

Growing Figs in Michigan

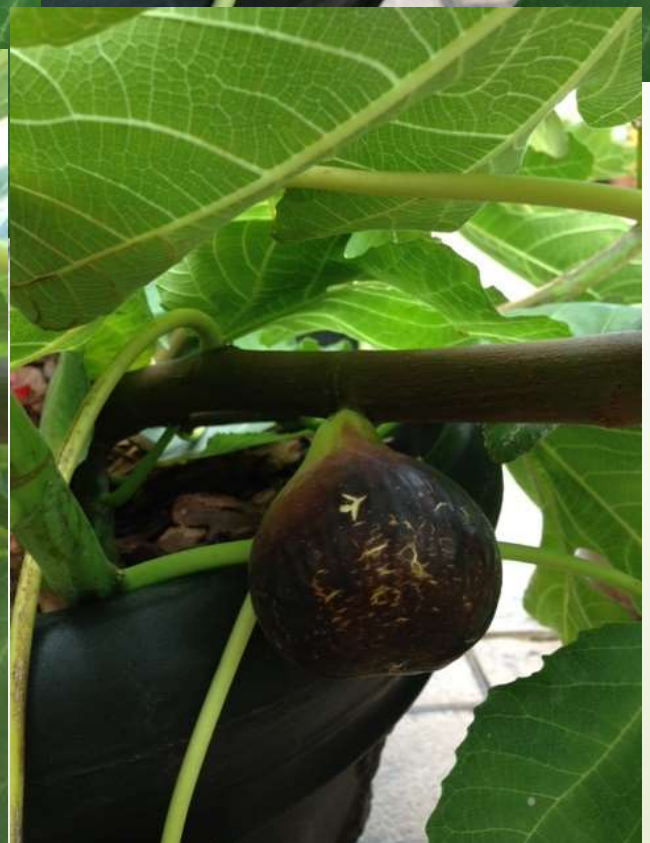
- Favorite Varieties
  - Over the past 5 years, I've grown and evaluated over 130 varieties with the desire to find the best tasting fig. When I've asked others what their favorites are, I could never get a straight answer. So I just began growing any that I could get my hands on.
  - Figs from the supermarket don't usually taste as good as ones that are harvested directly from a local tree. For this reason, its best to grow your own, if you have the patience.
  - Each year I get rid of 20-30 varieties that don't make the cut. My goal is to keep only 25. Problem is…. I seem to always add more than I discard. This is called "Fig Fever"
  - Here are photos of a few of my top Favorites.

Genovese Nero AF

Italian 258

GM 155 Maltese Beauty

Six day ripening of Maltese Beauty



GM 155 Maltese Beauty

D’en Manel MP

Martinenca Rimada
9-30-16

Nero 600 9-14-16

B.I.

Violette de Bordeaux
9-14-16

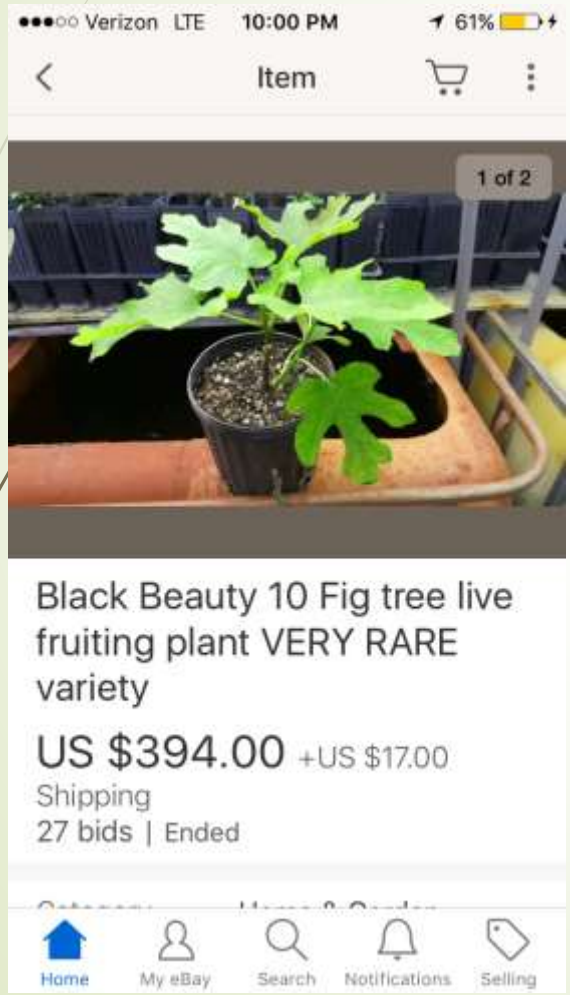
Preto 9-22-16

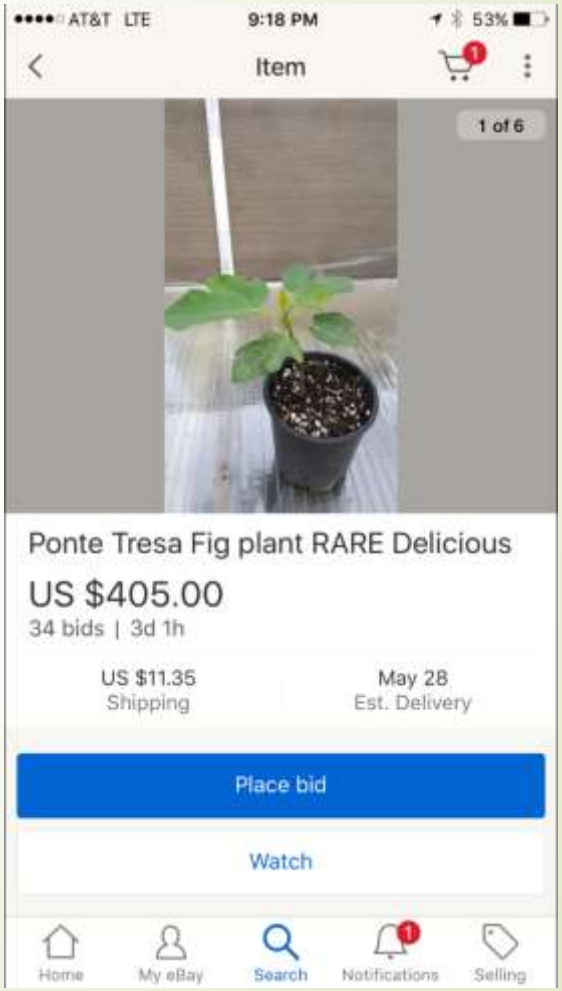
Black Madeira
9-29-16

Antonelli Unk

White/Green Figs

Some Varieties are highly prized


Verizon LTE 10:00 PM 61%
Item
1 of 2
Black Beauty 10 Fig tree live fruiting plant VERY RARE variety
US $394.00 +US $17.00
Shipping
27 bids | Ended
Home
My eBay
Search
Notifications
Selling


AT&T LTE 9:18 PM 53%
Item
1 of 6
Ponte Tresa Fig plant RARE Delicious
US $405.00
34 bids | 3d 1h
US $11.35
Shipping
May 28
Est. Delivery
Place bid
Watch
Home
My eBay
Search
Notifications
Selling

Growing Figs in Michigan

- A year in the life of a northern grown fig
  - Fig Shuffle (April 1-May 15th)
  - Growing
    - https://crfg.org/wiki/fruit/fig/
  - Winter Storage

5418 Mustang Dr

Spring Time “Fig Shuffle”

Repotting

- Soil
- Bark : Aged Pine bark is best.
- Compost
- Professional mixes
- Kroger Potting Soil
- Aged Manure
- Rice Hulls

Setting the pots in place.

- When do I bring them out of the Garage?
- April 15th – May 1
- As long as they are dormant.

At this stage, they are susceptible to a frost

Winter Storage

Winter Storage in the Basement

- Dark and Cool is best

Another way to over-winter

Grower Related Challenges

- Fugus gnats while rooting cuttings
- Yellow Jackets and Wasps
- Splitting
- Birds
- Rust
- Fig Mosaic Virus

Fungus Gnats

Yellow Jackets and Wasps

Splitting

Bird Damage

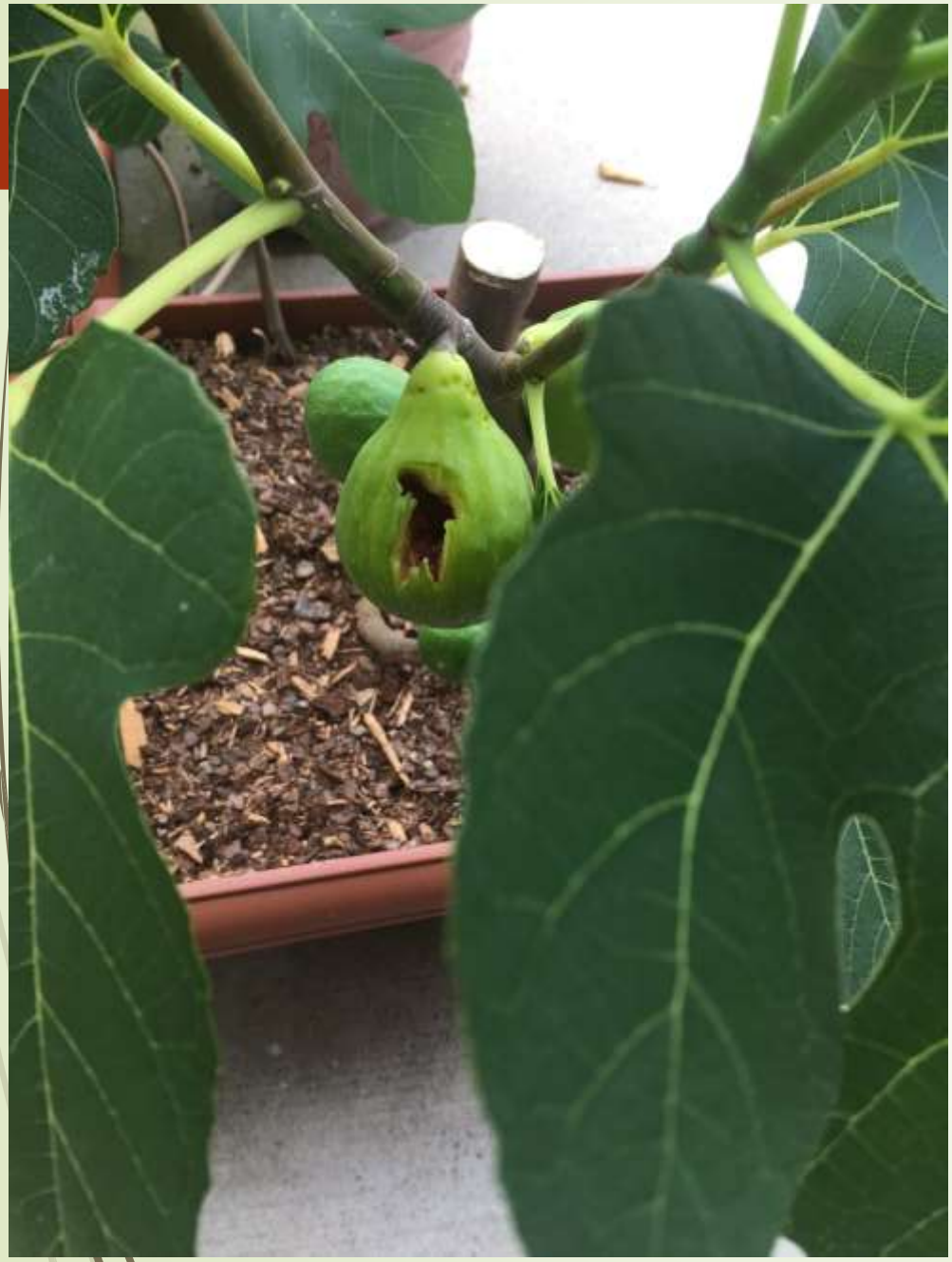


Fig Mosaic Virus

Rust

What to do with all those Figs???

MONK'S
BLOOD
MONK'S
BLOOD

Fig Jam

Dried Figs

Ice Cream blends

Thinning the Herd

Tagging

HARDY
Chicago
10-27-12
Celestial
10-27-12
Texas
Fairchild
10-27-12

Container Grown

Fig in a Tub

The Godfather of Figs

- adrianosfigtrees.com He's the "AF" in Genovese Nero AF

All grown in a northern climate, Adriano Ferreria has over thirty years of experience cultivating fig trees in Canada. He sells cuttings or plants. He will trade with any fig tree he doesn't have. Adriano has over two hundred varieties of fig trees, one of the largest private collections in the world. Due to export regulations and inquiries, Adriano will only sell to customers in Canada and due to the volume of inquiries will only provide advice and information on the cultivation of fig trees to those customers.

Monserrat Pons

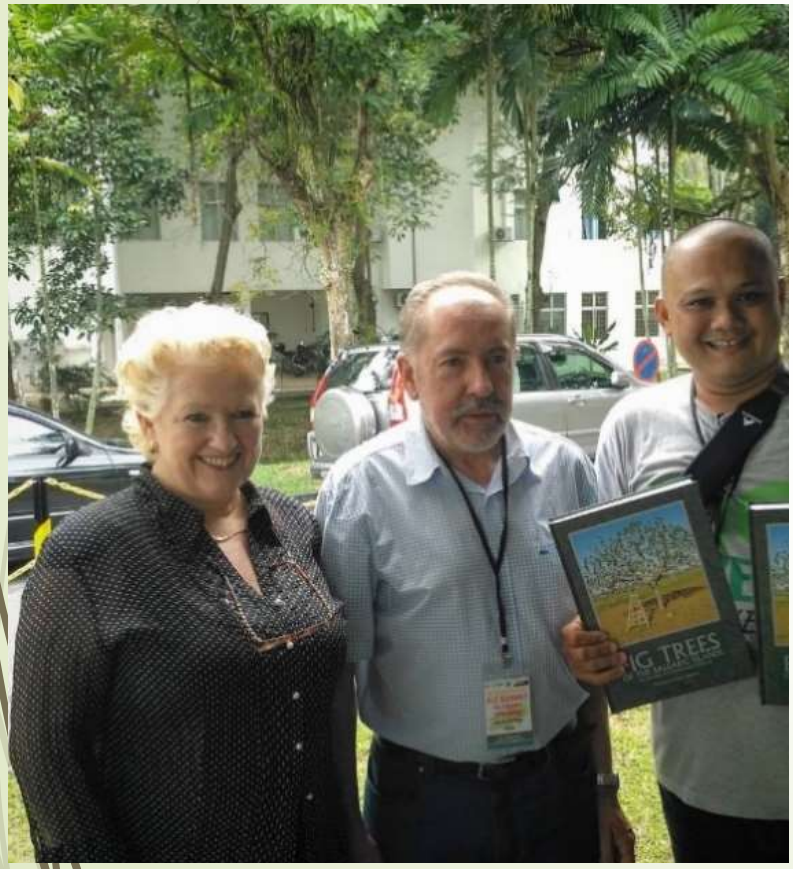
http://monserratpons.com/

In the heart of the Marina of Llucmajor (Mallorca), the estate of Son Mut Nou. Rough earth, and clay. Dry land where rain is a rare and rare good. Land of low mountain, of steppes and gamones, of woods and acebuches, with some scant pine that perfumes the plain. Wild land, with stalks stolen from the forest, with sweat and fatigue, for cultivation. Land of few trees, where the cultivated fig tree knows how to take advantage of the scarcity, knows how to survive because it adapts prodigiously to a medium that is, for reasons of remote, familiar origin. Earth where the fig tree, generous, extracts from the droughts and the clay the delight of its most delicious fruits ...

This is the telltale framework in which Montserrat Pons and Boscana, Llucmajor's pharmacist in love with the biblical tree and the microcosm that history and life have built around the fig trees, has embarked on a unique experience in the world ...

Montserrat, spurred by unusual behavior, has designed and developed, from the fig tree shoots of Miner, provided by his friend Pep Sacarés and Mulet, the project, today a very real reality, of constructing an experimental field of fig tree cultivation In order to contribute to the study and scientific knowledge of the tree and its fruit, the safeguarding of the heritage, the maintenance of our plant genetic resources, the promotion of traditional and popular culture, in search of the potential exploitation of the figs ... A work, ultimately aimed at promoting science, humanism, ecology and economics, with an altruistic and almost visionary dedication of the fig trees and figs.

Figs are very popular in Malaysia



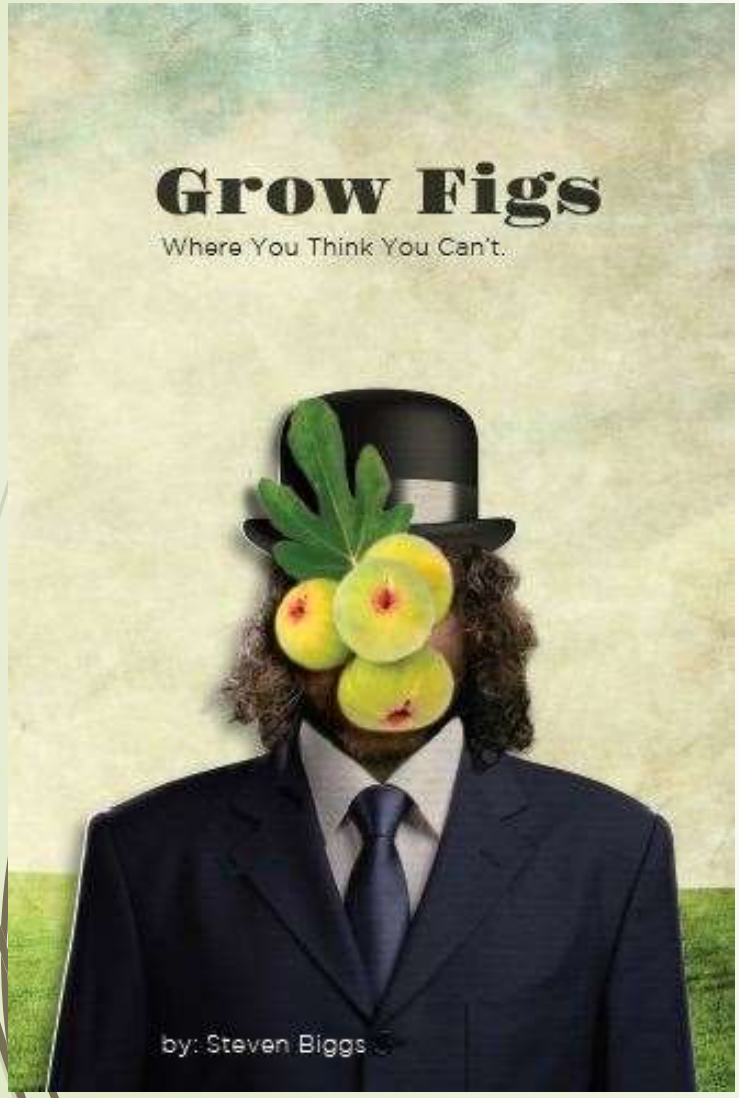
Belleclare Nursery

http://www.marthastewart.com/907952/fabulous-figs

Chris and Bill Dipaollo pictured with Herman from F4F.

http://figs4funforum.websitetoolbox.com/post/belleclare-brochurehandout-from-the-nursery-6189106?pid=1276708038#post1276708038

http://www.grow-figs.com/the-book-grow-figs/



Steven Biggs

https://youtu.be/4mpqNgnDUas

Probably one of the best videos on the web dedicated to growing figs in cold regions.

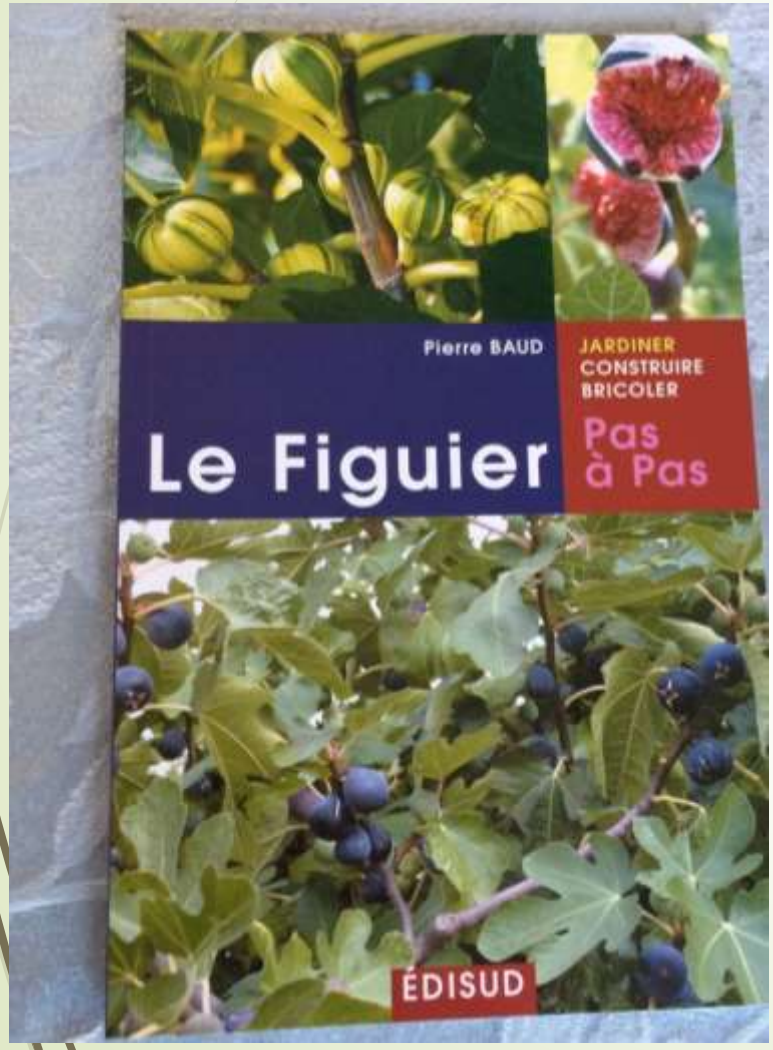
Harvey Correia

http://figaholics.com/

http://www.facebook.com/Figaholics

The Correia family is a third generation California farm family specializing mainly in Chestnuts. They began growing figs for their own home use beginning about 15 years ago and in 2012 began greatly expanding their collection to evaluate the many varieties they had heard so much about. By the summer of 2015 they had grown to approximately 300 varieties.

Pierre Baud



http://www.fig-baud.com/choixfiguiers.html

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cseW0zvJKOw In case you can speak French.

Bass Salaam – Trees of Joy

http://www.treesofjoy.com/

Trees of Joy is located in a suburb of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, cold hardiness zone 6. They're experimenting with growing all types of edible landscaping in their garden. For the past 11 years they've evaluated different care-free fruit trees that are uncommon for the area. They currently grow a few types of Pomegranates that proved to be hardy in zone 6, as well as Prickly pear Cactus, Oriental Persimmon, Jujube, Pawpaw, and a large collection of figs. Their primary purpose is to find the best suitable varieties for their climate. They mainly sell Fig trees and occasionally different grafted fruit trees when available, such as Jujube, Pawpaw, Persimmon, kiwis. They also carry the rare Cedar of Lebanon trees.

Bill Muzychko

http://figs4fun.com/bills_figs.html

Bill Muzychko Owner of Bill's Figs
329 Old York Road
Flemington, New Jersey 08822
wmuzy@comcast.net

http://figs4fun.com/basics_Intro.html

Probably the best source for information on growing figs on the internet. Jon as the owner of Encanto Farms and is the moderator of Figs4Fun. He is said to have over 800 varieties of figs.

http://encantofarms.com/

Thank You

Contact Info:

fosterdan755@gmail.com

734-657-9872

Dan Foster